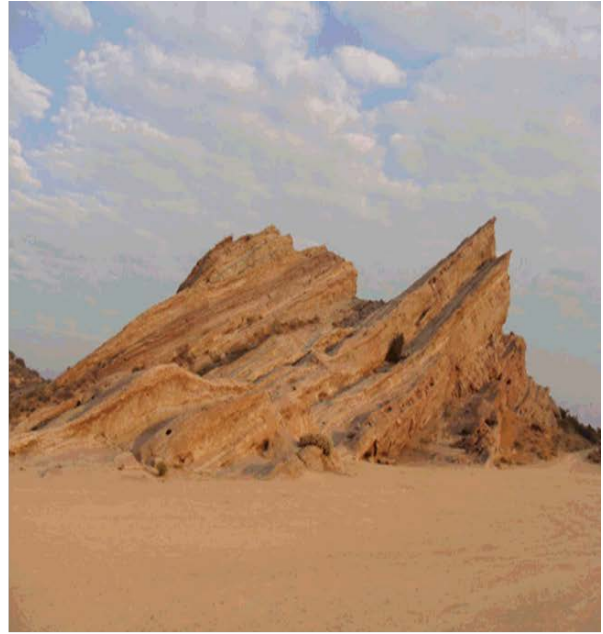


**PLACERITA CANYON TRAIL & VASQUEZ ROCKS HERITAGE TRAIL**  
**TRAIL ASSESSMENT PROCESS**  
**ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**



PLANNING AGENCY  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
October 1, 2012



## **Summary**

This report provides an analysis of comments received from members of the public during the public comment period for the assessment process and draft reports for the Placerita Canyon and Vasquez Rocks Heritage trails. The comment period occurred between June 28, 2012, when the draft trail assessment reports were released to the public, and ended on July 19, 2012. Comments were received from individuals (via email, letters, phone calls and comment cards) and through small-group discussion at a community meeting at William S. Hart Park on the evening of July 12, 2012. A total of seven hundred eighty-four (784) comments were received from the public during the comment period. While the public was instructed and provided the opportunity to comment on the assessment process and draft reports, most comments focused on user preference and experience, as opposed to the assessment process and reports. Only fifty-nine (59) of the comments received, referenced the assessment process and draft reports, but only one (1) comment specifically challenged the assessment process. Of the comments received, safety was the dominant theme among thirty-eight percent (38%) of the comments.

## **Introduction**

In response to a request from a mountain bike user group (bikers), the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) considered whether to allow mountain bikes on the Placerita Canyon and Vasquez Rocks Heritage trails. At issue is the Department's practice regarding prohibition of mountain bike use on trails located in "Natural Areas." Current Department practice holds that only equestrian and hiking uses are allowed on trails within "Natural Areas". The Department decided to take a closer look at the effect of adding mountain bike use only on the Placerita Canyon and Vasquez Rocks Heritage trails. The Planning Center|DC&E (consultant) and the Department employed the California State Parks' (State Parks) trail use change survey (assessment process) for the evaluation. The assessment process used by the consultant and the Department is almost identical to that used by State Parks, but was modified to reflect the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor's adopted trail manual guidelines and classifications. The assessment process was conducted by the consultant to obtain factual and objective information regarding the current condition of the trails and their ability to accept a third use.

## **Review of Comments**

Seven hundred eighty-four (784) comments were received during the public comment period. Four hundred seven (407) comments were received as part of the small group

discussion at the July 12, 2012 community meeting. Three hundred seven (307) comments were submitted via email, sixty (60) comments were submitted in comment card form at the July 12 meeting, nine letters (9) were mailed to the Department and one (1) phone call with comments was received by staff (refer to Table 1).

**Table 1. Comment(s) Type**

<b>Comment Type</b>	<b>Number of Comments*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Small Group (7/12 Meeting)	407	52%
Email	307	39%
Comment Card (7/12 Meeting)	60	8%
Letter	9	1%
Phone	1	<1%
Total	784	100%*
* Total percentage does not add to 100% due to rounding.		

Of the seven hundred eighty-four (784) comments received, two hundred thirty-five (235) commenters identified with a user group (hiker, biker, or equestrian). Eleven percent (11%) of those identified as a hiker, ten percent (10%) as an equestrian and five percent (5%) as a biker. Some commenters declined to identify with a group. Comments received as part of the small group discussions were not identified by user group as the nature of the discussions made it difficult to identify comments by user group. This group of comments accounted for seventy percent (70%) of the total received (refer to Table 2).

**Table 2. Comments by User Group**

<b>Identified with a User Group</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hiker	87	11%
Equestrian	79	10%
Biker	38	5%
Multiple Groups	31	4%
Did Not Identify	549	70%
Total	784	100%

While the public was instructed and provided the opportunity to comment on the assessment process and draft reports, most comments focused on user preference and experience, as opposed to the assessment process and reports. Only fifty-nine (59) of

the comments received actually referenced the assessment process and draft reports, but only one (1) comment specifically challenged the assessment process. The commenter stated that State Parks' assessment process is in draft form and is awaiting public review; therefore, the commenter argues that the Department should not have used State Parks' assessment process. Specifically related to the Placerita Canyon trail, the commenter also states that the assessment process fails to take into account the context of the area (equestrian community), the availability of other nearby parking areas, the presence of fixed land use assets (land planned and zoned for horse-keeping) and the mission of the Placerita Canyon Nature Center. *It should be noted that the purpose of the assessment process was to evaluate the condition of the trail and the trail's sustainability as it pertains to existing and/or proposed use(s). The assessment process was not intended to evaluate external factors such as parking, adjacent land-use and the mission of the facility, which do not contribute to the sustainability of the trail.* While not specific to this study, the Department has and continues to view its parks in a holistic manner in regard to the communities in which they are situated.

**Table 3. Comments by Theme**

<b>Comment Themes</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Safety	296	38%
Supports Hiker and/or Equestrian	97	12%
Other	93	12%
Supports Hiker, Biker and Equestrian	69	9%
Natural/Cultural Resources	62	8%
Trail Assessment Report & Process	59	8%
Maintenance Needs	44	6%
Etiquette & Education	38	5%
Supports Bikes with Rules	26	3%
Total	784	100%*
* Total Percentage does not add to 100% due to rounding.		

Table 3 illustrates the comments organized by primary theme. Of the comments received, safety was the predominant theme reflected in thirty-eight percent (38%) of the comments. Comments pertaining to safety include the width of trails, lack of sight distance, speed, the lack of etiquette from the bikers and behavioral characteristics of horses. *The Department will address the safety concerns as identified in the Trail Assessment Reports to ensure that the Placerita Canyon Trail is a safe trail for all users. In addition, the Department is committed to ensuring that the natural and cultural resources are preserved for future trail and natural area users.*

**Determination:**

- The Department analyzed and reviewed all comments received.
- The Department upholds the consultant's recommendation to not allow mountain bike use on the "Vasquez Rocks Heritage Trail" due to alternatives available and sensitivity of the cultural resources.
- The Department upholds the consultant's recommendation to allow mountain bike use on the "Placerita Canyon Trail" due to recreational demand and Department's ability to address safety concerns and sustainability issues.
- The Department will address safety and sustainability items noted in the *Trail Assessment Report, Canyon Trail – Placerita Canyon Natural Area*.
- The Department will issue a maintenance and sustainability implementation and timeline for completion.